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UNCLAS VILNIUS 000701

SIPDIS

FRANKFURT FOR RCO - BARBARA ARMSTRONG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PHOTO-SUBBED NEW LITHUANIAN PASSPORTS: A SPOT REPORT

¶1. Summary: The Consular Department of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry recently informed us that its Embassy in London has been receiving large numbers of successfully photo-substituted new Lithuanian passports. According to the MFA, the photo-substitutions are extremely good and can only be detected by specially-trained personnel. End Summary.

¶2. Forgers have apparently uncovered a weakness in the security features of the new-generation Lithuanian passport, which Lithuania began issuing in 2003. The biographic data page of the passport is a polycarbonate laser-engraved, laminated card. The Consular Department explained that this card is made up of seven separate layers, with the top several layers containing security features protecting the layer actually containing the digital photo. Forgers have uncovered a way to slice along the edge of the card and separate layers without disturbing the security features in the top layers. They then insert a laser-printed photo onto a thin film, which is placed over the existing photo. The layers are then glued back together. The photo-substitution is virtually undetectable.

¶3. The Lithuanian Consular Department reports that the Embassy in London receives on average 40 such photo-substituted passports out of 80 in any given week. Detection is apparently possible with training and using special equipment. We have asked the Consular Department for additional information about these fraudulent documents. We also requested that it provide our staff with training in detecting these fraudulent documents. The Consular Department agreed to do so at the earliest opportunity. We will inform the Department promptly of any additional information we receive regarding these photo-subbed passports and their detection.

KELLY